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AT RETREAT



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AT RETREAT

A Dramatic Fancy of the Civil War

IN ONE ACT

By Arthur A. Blunt
"

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO
1901

At Retreat

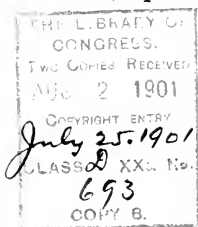
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CHARACTERS

COL. WILFRED BARLOW, (C. S. A.).
CAPT. PHILIP BARLOW, (U. S. A.).
POMPEY, (Servant to COL. BARLOW).
CORP. YOST, (First Georgia Wild-cats.)
MRS. KATE WAINWRIGHT, (COL. BARLOW's sister).
DOROTHY, (MRS. WAINWRIGHT's adopted daughter).
HENRIETTA, (The maid).

Costumes modern and military.

Date, April 12th, 1865. Time, afternoon.



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NOTE.

During the last few months of the civil war, the more southern states were almost entirely ignorant of the movements of the army of Virginia under General Lee.

It often happened that it was weeks before the news of Lee's surrender reached the Confederate camps in the South.

At Retreat.

SCENE.—*Sitting-room in commander's quarters of Confederate army post. Plainly furnished room. Table with pens, ink, paper, etc. Map on the wall, stand of Confederate colors in corner, drum, muskets, etc., suggestive of war-time.*

(MRS. WAINWRIGHT and DOROTHY discovered. MRS. W. knitting grey stocking or making bandages. DOR. pretending to read.)

DOROTHY (*speaks very quietly*). Mother.

MRS. WAINWRIGHT. Yes, dear.

DOR. Isn't to-day the twelfth?

MRS. W. Let me see—Sunday was the ninth. (*Counts to herself.*) Yes, it's the twelfth day of April. Why do you ask?

DOR. (*very quietly*). It is Philip's birthday.

MRS. W. Hush. (*Glances round.*) Have you forgotten that your uncle has forbidden that name to be spoken in his house?

DOR. I have not forgotten.

MRS. W. Then why will you keep speaking of him? When my brother's son forgot his home and duty, and entered the ranks of the Federal army, he disgraced the name he bears. He is no longer worthy of your thoughts; he is your enemy, fighting against his friends, his flag, his own father. Remember, Dorothy, you are a southern girl, and can love none but those who wear the grey.

DOR. (*proudly*). I *am* a southern girl and love the stars and bars and hate the Yankees who are fighting against us. You need not fear that I shall forget I am a Rebel.

MRS. W. (*pause*). Pompey tells me that the pickets captured a Federal, day before yesterday, and brought him into camp.

DOR. Yes—a young officer.

MRS. W. Indeed! You have seen him, then?

DOR. (*quickly*). Only a glimpse; it was when he was being taken to the guard tent, yesterday.

MRS. W. I wonder what state he is from?

DOR. Pompey says he is from Massachusetts.

MRS. W. Massachusetts! Did he say what regiment?

DOR. The Fifty-second. (*Buries face in handkerchief.*)

MRS. W. The Fifty-second! Why, that is the regiment Philip went into! Dorothy, that's Phil's regiment.

DOR. (*sobbing*). Yes, I know it.

MRS. W. (*knits very fast*). Now isn't that strange? I wonder who he is? Perhaps he knows Phil. It isn't likely, though; probably he's nothing but a Yankee spy. Well, if he is they will hang him, I suppose. Dorothy, (*wipes her eyes*) do you imagine he knows Phil?

DOR. (*sobbing*). Yes, I think—I don't —

COL. BARLOW (*enters in fatigue uniform, riding boots, etc.*). Well, this looks cheerful. What's the trouble, Dot? Has Pompey been obstinate again? I'll have that black rascal thrashed —

DOR. (*goes to him; kisses him*). Pompey has been just as good as he could be. There's nothing the matter. Can't you see I'm smiling?

COL. I see you are trying to smile, but it isn't very successful. (*Sits c.*) Come, little girl, tell me all about it, and we'll see what can be done.

DOR. (*quietly*). I was only thinking of Philip.

COL. That was all, was it? (*Rises.*) I don't wonder that you cry. Ungrateful boy that he was. I tell you, Dorothy, he is not worthy of your tears. He has disgraced us all. Three years in a northern college have made him forget that he is a southerner. (*To himself.*) To think that my son—my son—should turn traitor to his country, ay, take up arms against his home and his flag. My son! No, he is not my son—I tell you, girl, I will not talk of him. I buried him when he first put on that Federal blue.

MRS. W. Dorothy was just saying that to-day is his birthday. Had you thought of it?

COL. Thought of it—no! I tell you, I have ceased to think of him. I wish to hear no more about him. And more, Kate—we are not known here; let nobody know that I have a son. (*Walks up and down the room.*)

MRS. W. (*after a pause*). What is the news from the front?

COL. Little enough, but discouraging. General Lee is hard pressed, so the reports say, but the wires are down all over the country, the railroads totally destroyed, and all the news we get is by courier, and days late.

MRS. W. Do you think General Lee's army is in danger?

COL. No, no, I won't say that; there can be no especial danger, but the reports are bad, bad.

DOR. Uncle Will.

COL. Well, Dot, what is it?

DOR. Have you (*nervously*)—have you seen the prisoner?

COL. Prisoner? So, we have a fine Yankee in the toils, haven't we? I had forgotten it. No, I haven't seen him yet.

DOR. Do you think he is a spy?

MRS. W. Dorothy, dear child, you must not worry yourself about these things.

DOR. Do you, Uncle Will?

COL. Well, what else can he be? When an enemy enters our lines at night, alone, he certainly must come as a spy.

DOR. But couldn't he be trying to get through our lines to his own command?

COL. Why, child, there are no Union camps between us and Atlanta.

DOR. But, uncle, don't you think you ought to see him?

COL. (*teasingly*). What for? To give him a chance to plead for mercy?

MRS. W. Has he been tried yet?

COL. I ordered a drum-head court-martial before I went to Ellsworth. I rather expected to receive a report by this time.

DOR. Suppose he is found guilty?

COL. (*firmly and quietly*). He will be shot.

DOR. Shot!

MRS. W. Why, Dorothy, —

POMP. (*at door*). Dat's all rite, sar—dis yer coon am de 'spatch bearer to dis yer 'stablishment. I's turble sorry, but caain't 'low no outsiders insider dese yer he'dquarters.

YOST (*outside*). I t-t-t-tell you I-I-I —

POMP. Sorry, sar, can't wait to hyar yo' nohow. Yo' jes' gib me dat 'spatch. De Kunnel been waitin' fo' it sense fo' clock dis mo'nin'. Yo' jes' wait rite hyar fo' de Kunnel's complimuch. (*Enters with dispatch*.) Mars' Kunnel I's turble sorry to keep yo' waitin' fo' dis yer 'spatch—done brung it rite 'long sar, never waited fo' to breve, no sar.

COL. (*tears open dispatch*). Ah !

MRS. W. Is it news from General Lee ?

COL. No, it is the findings of the court-martial. (*Reads.*)
“Drum-head court-martial ordered by you finds prisoner guilty
of being a spy. Buckner, Judge Advocate.” (*Pause ; quietly.*)
“And the sentence is—death.”

DOR. Uncle Will, won't you see him ? Perhaps he isn't a
spy—perhaps ——

COL. Dorothy, this is very strange, to hear you plead for a
Yankee.

DOR. But, uncle, suppose you knew—suppose before the
war he had been your friend ——

COL. My child, this is war—I do not know what you
mean by my friend before the war. I only know that this
Federal entered my lines as a spy, and the penalty for that is
death.

MRS. W. Poor boy—whoever he is. (*Wipes eyes.*)

DOR. Uncle Will, suppose your son ——

COL. (*in anger*). I tell you I have no son.

DOR. Suppose, Philip, after four long years of fighting—
longing day by day, yes, even perhaps dying for a sight of his
old home and his father, were to steal through your lines, will-
ing to risk his life, if need be, to see you, to see—to—to see—
me—once again, and your soldiers should catch him and con-
demn him to death for being a spy—would you—would you
order him—your own son—to be shot ? (*She stands in a
pleading attitude before him.*)

MRS. W. Dorothy, what do you mean ?

DOR. Uncle Will, suppose Phil were the prisoner ?

COL. If he were my son ! Phil, my boy—shot as a spy !
No, it can't be Phil. He is away up north amongst our
enemies, fighting against his father ; the prisoner is his com-
rade, one of the cowards who turned him against his flag and
me. He is an enemy of the Confederacy, a spy. He entered
my lines to gain the information that would betray me to the
Federal troops. He must die. (*Calls.*) Pomp.

POMP. Yes, sah, rite hyar, sah.

COL. Bring me pen and ink and paper.

POMP. Yes, sah, rite hyar, sar. (*Moves the paper, etc.,
that are on table at which COL. is standing.*)

COL. (*sits, writes, rises, reads*). “Findings of court-mar-
tial approved. Prisoner will be shot at Retreat to-night.”

DOR. Uncle Will, not that—think, think of Philip !

COL. (*sternly*). You, Dorothy, a southern girl and beg for an enemy's life. Have you too turned traitor to your country's cause? My son—I would to God that the prisoner were my son, that by ordering him to be shot at Retreat to-night I might wipe out the disgrace he has brought upon my name. He is a spy, and though he were my son he should die to-night.

MRS. W. Wilfred, think what you are saying.

(DOROTHY *sinks into chair* L., *sobbing*. POMP. *during speech at door rear, talking to one outside*.)

POMP. (*comes down, bows, etc.*). Mars' Kunnel, de prisner say as how he lek to speak wif yo', sah.

COL. I will see the prisoner at Retreat. Kate, come with me. [*Exeunt* COL. and MRS. W. L. U. E.]

DOR. (*springs up*). At Retreat to-night. (*As if dazed*.) At Retreat. He must be saved, he shall be. What shall I do—O, Phil, how can I save you?

POMP. (*whispers*). Miss Dorothy?

DOR. Pompey, you here! What have you heard?

POMP. Ssh! Miss Dorothy! Mars' Phil—he's down dar in de ole smoke-house by de willows. After de cote-martial dey totes him down dar. It am hotter dan de debbil out, an' de guard am in de shade ob de wood, only de tow-hedded copral what hab de peppermint in his speech. Dey ain't nothin' but a button on de do', an' if we could only get the stutterin' gemman out ob de way, I could git down dar an' unbutton de do', an' Mars' Phil could out an' shine fo' de cane-brake, den I button de do' an' nobody doan't miss him tell he got to de swamp. Only, Miss Dorothy, we got to move dretful smart, kase dey gwin' to change de guard mighty soon.

DOR. You say there is no one in front of the door of the hut but Corporal Yost?

POMP. Dat's all, only Corporal Ghost.

DOR. And if we could get him out of the way—but how can we?

POMP. I'm ding-busted if I know', less I set de blam' dog onto him.

DOR. Wait! No, we can't do that.

POMP. Hol' on, Miss Dorothy, dar's Henretta; dat yer soldier feller he stuck on her fo' sho'. If she was to go down dar an' make lub—hi-hi-hi——

DOR. The very thing. (*Rings bell*.) Pompey, you watch the door.

HENRIETTA. (*enters, L. U. E.*). Did yez ring, Miss Dorothy, I dunno?

DOR. Yes. (*Slowly*). Henrietta, do you remember Mr. Philip?

HEN. (*looking round frightened*). Sure, um, the masther caught me talkin' about him the other day, and he trew a book at me. Sure whin I talk of him now I kape still.

DOR. He used to be very kind to you, Henrietta.

HEN. Thru for ye, um.

DOR. Do you remember whenever he came back from school, he always brought you a present; and when you were sick, he used to buy fruit for you, and —

HEN. (*covers face with apron*). Sure, um, it's manny the day I've thought ave the poor bye an' the kind heart of him, an'—an' divil the night has passed over me head since the war broke out, that I haven't asked the Howly Vargin to remember an' watch over the lad that his father here has forgotten.

DOR. Would you like to repay him for all that he has done for you?

HEN. Sure, um, thare ain't nothing I wouldn't do for Mr. Philip.

* DOR. (*nervously*). Henrietta, you know there is a Union soldier, a prisoner in the old smoke-house?

HEN. I do, um.

DOR. He is to be shot at Retreat to-night.

HEN. Arrah, poor lad. An' do yez know who the bye is, um?

DOR. It's—it's—Philip. (*Breaks down.*)

HEN. Ah! what's that ye say, um. Mr. Philip! Howly St. Patrick! Ah, wirra, wirra!

POMP. Fo' de Law sakes! yo'll hab de guard in hyar sho', if yo' doan't mek' les' noise.

HEN. Howld yer tongue, yez spalpeen. Faith then, um, chair up; sure it's his own father that's in command here.

DOR. Yes, and his—Colonel Barlow says he must die.

HEN. His own son? Well, blister his sowle!

DOR. Henrietta, we must be quick. There is but one guard in front of the smoke-house, Corporal Yost. If you will go down and make love to him—you know, just get him away from the front of the hut, then Pompey can unbutton the door, and Philip can escape to the cane-brake. Will you, Henrietta?

HEN. Sure, um, yez want me to make love to the spindle legged felly wid the spring halt in his talk?

DOR. Yes; will you, Henrietta?

HEN. Sure I'd make love to owld Nick himself to help Mr. Philip.

DOR. Remember, Henrietta—you—you—are helping one of our enemies to escape.

HEN. Whist! don't waste yez breath, um; sure ain't it me own bye Timmie that's been marchin' to Yankee Doodle for the last four years. Are yez ready, Pomp?

POMP. Mis' Dorothy, de boat am already in de swamp, an' ise gwine wif Mars' Phil down to de bend in de crick an' den dey kan't ketch him fo' sho'.

DOR. God bless you, Pompey. (*Gives him revolver.*) Give Mr. Philip this—they may try to follow him with dogs. O! Pompey, you'll do your best to save him?

POMP. Mars' Phil was powerful good to ole Pomp ever since he warnt nuffin' but jes' a lil' honey; an' now, Miss Dorothy, ole Pomp gwine to save him, or lay rite down side ob him an' die. [*Exeunt HEN. and POMP.*]

DOR. (*sits at table, sobbing*). O, my heart aches so.

MRS. W. (*enters R. U. E.*). Dorothy, dear, what, crying still? I expect Captain Andrews here to tea; go, dear, and change your dress and bathe your eyes. (*DOR. exits silently R. U. E.*) Poor girl, it was a hard blow to her to have Philip turn out so bad. They were to have been married this June. Poor Dorothy—and poor Philip too. (*Wipes eyes.*)

COL. (*enters L. U. E. trying to buckle on sword*). Kate, have you seen Pomp? (*Calls.*) Pomp, you rascal!

MRS. W. What is it, Will? Perhaps I can help you. Is it the sword?

COL. Yes, the sword, the boots, the hat, everything—where's that Pomp—

MRS. W. (*rings bell*). I'll see if Henrietta knows. Let me see if I can't button the coat for you. Strange where Henrietta is. (*Rings bell.*)

DOR. (*runs in L. U. E.*). O mother, Henrietta has gone out after some berries, won't I do?

COL. Have you seen Pomp?

DOR. Pompey? why let me see—O, uncle let me buckle your sword for you. There, now, the hat. Where are the gloves? O, here they are! (*Shots outside; DOROTHY drops gloves, leans on table.*)

YOST (*rushes in C.; salutes*). C-c-c-col-I-I-I-have-t-t-t—

COL. Well what?

YOST. T-th-th-th-the p-p-p-p-ah-ah-pr-pr —

COL. What's the trouble?

YOST. The-pr-pr-pr-pr —

COL. Speak, man —

YOST. I-I-c-c-c-c-c —

COL. (*roaring*). Well, sing it, damn it—sing it.

YOST (*sings*). The prisoner has escaped and has made for the cane-brake.

COL. The prisoner escaped! Dorothy!

DOR. (*proudly*). Well, sir.

COL. Corporal, follow me. [COL. and YOST *exeunt* c.]

(DOROTHY *sinks into chair*; MRS. W. *stands looking at her*; *retreat sounds outside on the bugle. At the first note DOROTHY rises and stands to the end of the call.*)

DOR. Retreat, mother; they have sounded Retreat, but the prisoner has escaped. (*Breaks down.*)

MRS. W. Dorothy, daughter, what does this mean?

HEN. (*enters c.*). Sure, um, it worked beautiful. He niver turned—ah, bad luck to it, there's the missus!

MRS. W. Henrietta, I do not understand this.

HEN. Sure, thin, I'm glad av that.

MRS. W. I wish to speak with you alone; come with me. Dorothy, remain here till I return.

DOR. Yes, mother. (*Exeunt MRS. W. and HEN. L. U. E.*; DOR. *runs to window rear.*) The guard are going down towards the cane-brake; there is a squad searching the willows by the hut. O, if it would only grow dark faster. The sergeant of the Guard is coming back. I wonder what he is after. (*Screams.*) The blood-hounds! O, Phil! Pompey said he would wait in the boat. (*Lights lamp on table.*) If he can only reach the big river, he is safe. (*PHIL. enters c., his blue uniform torn and muddy, glances round, comes softly up.*) I wanted to see him so. O Phil, why did you go north?

PHIL. (*softly*). Dorothy.

DOR. Philip! (*Springs into his arms.*)

PHIL. Dorothy, my darling, my love! (*Kiss, etc.*)

DOR. (*breaks from him*). But, Phil, why did you come here? Quick! you must go.

PHIL. Tell me, dear, do you still —

DOR. Phil, for God's sake, dear, go, go! They will shoot you at sight! For my sake, go.

PHIL. They condemned me because they took me to be a

spy. They gave me no show at the trial. I will wait and see the colonel; there is no chance for me to escape now.

DOR. You must, Phil, you must.

PHIL. But dear, listen; the colonel will never ——

DOR. Phil, the colonel is your father.

PHIL. My father.

DOR. Yes, Phil, your father. He is very bitter against you. Hark! there's some one coming. Quick, behind the chair. (*Drops behind c.*)

HEN. (*enters R. 1 E.*). It's a great time I've been havin' wid the missus. Sure, miss, what's the trouble wid yez? What's that behind the chair? Mr. Philip! (*He rises.*) The saints presarve us! (*Shakes his hand.*) Sure yez must be gettin' out of this lively. (*Runs to door c.*) Quick, sor, the guard is coomin'; git out on the piazza, and whin they git into the house, drop to the ground and run for the stable. Quick, sor, or yez won't have time.

PHIL. I'll do it. (*Kisses DOR.*) Good-bye, sweetheart.

HEN. They're coomin'. It's too late. (*Runs to door and tries to turn guard's attention the other way.*)

DOR. Quick, Phil, in this room. It's your only chance.
[*Exit PHIL. R. 2 E.*]

COL. and YOST enter c.

COL. You haven't seen anything yet, corporal. Strange. Your men have orders to shoot to kill?

YOST. Y-y-y-yes, s-s-sir.

COL. Dorothy, have you seen Pomp yet?

DOR. No, sir.

COL. Have you seen the prisoner at any time to-day?
Answer, girl.

HEN. Sure, sor, divil a sign she's seen of him to-day, sor.

COL. (*as to himself*). He can't be in the house here. (*Moves up stage. DOR. instinctively moves in front of door.*) Dorothy, who is in that room? I'll see myself.

YOST. C-c-c-c-colonel, he-he-here's f-f-f-f-footprints o-o-on the floor.

COL. (*hurriedly*). You're right, corporal.

YOST. It's t-t-t-the m-m-mud of the c-c-c-cane-brake, s-s-sir.

HEN. Arrah be aisy, sor, them's me own footprints, an' it ain't swamp mud at all at all, it's the pig-pen.

COL. Dorothy, open that door! Corporal, search the room.

(DOR. screams ; CORP. opens door, opens mouth, tries to speak, can't, touches COL., points.) Sing it, man.

YOST (*sings*). He's crawling out of the window, shall I shoot?

COL. Yes, and shoot to kill. (*YOST raises musket.*)

DOR. (*screams*). Don't ! (*Throws the rifle up ; it explodes in the air.*)

COL. The door, corporal, he can't escape. (*Exit Yost in a hurry R.*) Dorothy, I suspected your hand was in this business. (*Enter MRS. W.*) Kate, I charge this young lady with having aided the prisoner to escape ; you will see that she does not leave the house until after the prisoner is captured and shot. (*Sits at table.*)

MRS. W. (*quietly*). Very well, Wilfred.

YOST. (*enters C. ; pushes PHIL. ahead of him*). T-t-t-the pris-pr-prisoner, sir. (*YOST has with him two or more members of the guard.*)

COL. (*busy writing, back to PHIL.*). So, young man, you have decided to stay with us a little longer, have you?

MRS. W. Philip ! (*Covers face with hands.*)

(DOROTHY tries to go to PHIL. ; guard keep her back.)

COL. (*writing*). Prisoner condemned as spy will be shot at sunrise, Thursday, April 13.

PHIL. Colonel, I am not afraid to die, but I wish you would change that word spy. I did not come as a spy.

COL. That voice ! My God ! (*Rises ; pauses ; looks round.*) Philip, my son !

PHIL. Father ! (*Steps forward, guard stop him with bayonets.*)

COL. My son ! A spy !

PHIL. No, I did not come as a spy. I wanted to see the old home once again, so getting a leave of absence I started south. I wanted to take the shortest route, and so struck across country, and was captured by your pickets and brought here.

COL. You wanted to see the old home. You are tired of the north and the traitors' flag you have been fighting under, and are ready to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederacy and join our ranks ? My boy, —

PHIL. No, colonel, do not mistake me. The old home is very dear to me, but I am a Union soldier ; you can shoot me for a spy but never as a traitor.

COL. Traitor! You were that when you forgot your duty to the South and joined the Federal army? Let there be one in the family who knows his duty and can perform it. You will not be my son, you are my enemy. (*Reads order.*) "Prisoner condemned as spy will be shot" (*DOR. sobs aloud*) "at sunrise, April 13."- (*Makes move to sign; hesitates.*)

DOR. (*comes quietly to COL.'s side. He does not notice her; she takes hold of his belt.*) Uncle Will, don't you remember when Philip and I were little, and Phil fell into the river? You said I saved him then, didn't you, Uncle Will? You said he owed his life to me, and he gave it to me then to keep forever. And don't you remember when aunty died, she asked you to take care of Philip, and never let anything harm him? We used to be happy before aunty died, didn't we, Uncle Will? Uncle Will, don't you—you—remember?

COL. Yes, I remember; my boy loved me then.

DOR. He loves you now, Uncle Will. He was on his way home to see you.

COL. (*slowly*). He was coming home to see his father! (*Brokenly.*) Phil! for God's sake, boy, can't you see what you are doing? I can't do my duty—I can't order my own son to be shot. Think, lad, it's your father who asks you.

PHIL. Father, you must do your duty as I am doing mine.

COL. Dorothy! speak to him!

DOR. Phil!

PHIL. No, dear, don't ask of me what you know I cannot do. Colonel, if I have been condemned as a spy——

DOR. Philip, don't, don't——

PHIL. Then there is but one thing for you to do—your duty.

COL. (*slowly*). Yes, I must do my duty; I must sign away the life of my only son. (*Pause.*) Corporal, take the prisoner to the guard-house.

DOR. Phil, they shall not take you.

COL. (*quietly and sadly*). Dorothy.

DOR. Uncle Will! (*COL. turns from her.*) Mother! (*Sobbing.*)

COL. Corporal! (*Motions guard off.*)

CORPORAL (*growsl*). Come on. (*GUARD move away with PHIL.*)

DOR. (*stretches arms towards PHIL., whispers*). Philip! (*Sinks into chair; buries head on arms at table.*)

(PHIL. *wrenches away from GUARD and springs towards*
DOR. GUARD *catch him with bayonets.*)

POMP. (*rushes in c., followed by ORDERLY covered with mud*). Hyar's de Kunnel, sah.

(ORDERLY *salutes ; hands COL. dispatch.*)

COL. (*tears opens dispatch ; reads*). "General Lee surrendered on the 9th. The war is over."

DOR. (*rises ; speaks as if dazed*). The war is over ! The war over ! Philip !

PHIL. (*catches her in his arms*). Dorothy !

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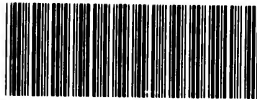
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